

# THANKS FOR THE MEMORIES



PHOTO BY DENNIS ANDERSON, ANTELOPE DAILY PRESS

The early morning fire at  
Camp Roberts took more  
than a building; it took 62  
years of entertainment  
history.

**By Lisa Cooksey**

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**M**ore than 60 years of history was wiped out in minutes Sunday, May 4th at Camp Roberts when the Recreation Center, referred to as Club 50, burned to the ground at 1:20 a.m. Fortunately there were no injuries.

More than 300 soldiers at Camp Roberts to support the War on Terrorism have been frequently using the Club. They found the club a refreshing and welcome break from the long training days and intense preparations for their pending humanitarian missions in Southwest Asia. "It's a sad day for Camp Roberts," Colonel Bill Hatch said. "The Service Club was not only an historical site, but a good friend. It linked the modern day soldiers with those who trained here in the past."

Built in 1941, the 14,000-square foot Service Club was the site of many a happy night. Thousands of soldiers training at Camp Roberts during the World War II era played pool, board games and cards, and danced. The popular service club hosted famous entertainers such as Bob Hope, Bing Crosby, and Red Skelton. For

many soldiers of the WWII and Korean War eras, the entertainment at Camp Roberts' service club was the last entertainment they would enjoy before being sent in harm's way. For Some, it was the last entertainment they would ever see.

These memories never really faded. In the 1970s, the California National Guard restored the installation's recreation center when it assumed the Camp's management from the Army. Big screen televisions and VCRs replaced the board games and playing cards and allowed soldiers a place of respite where they could enjoy a pizza away from the sometimes harsh Camp Roberts environment. The Recreation Center also housed bicycles and athletic equipment used by soldiers for recreation – and the only laundromat on post. For now, soldiers will be bussed into town to do laundry.

"Club 50 will not only be remembered for the relaxing and fun times spent there, but also for its magic. Soldiers were immediately aware that they shared a place with several generations of soldiers before them." stated Hatch. 🐾



**ABOVE LEFT TO RIGHT:** Bing Crosby, Bob Hope, and Red Skelton were just three of the top-notch entertainers who entertained the troops at Camp Roberts during WWII and the Korean War.



**LEFT PHOTO:** Little more than ashes remain of the Camp Roberts Service Club after the disastrous May fire. The fire was contained in about an hour-and-a-half and did not spread to nearby buildings.

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